

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00
NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 4657
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 3542

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV, PDIP, PBOR, LE, SY, PLO
SUBJECT: PALESTINIAN CEASE-FIRE IN SOUTH LEBANON

1. SUMMARY: MOUSSA KANAAN INTERPRETS SUDDEN PALESTINIAN WILLING-
NESS IMPLEMENT CEASE-FIRE AND MAJOR TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS IN
SOUTH LEBANON AS MANEUVER BY ABU IYAD FACTION OF THE PLO TO DE-
POSE ARAFAT. "LEBANESE FRONT" LEADERS HAVE NOT BEEN INVOLVED IN
NEGOTIATIONS. THEY ARE CONVINCED CEASEFIRE WILL NOT WORK, AND
MAY INDEED HOPE IT DOESN'T. END SUMMARY.

2. POLOFF MOLINEAUX CALLED ON BRIGADIER GENERAL MOUSSA KANAAN
JULY 22. KANAAN IS MEMBER OF LEBANESE DELEGATION TO NEWLY-EST-
ABLISHED LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN-SYRIAN COMMITTEE, WHICH MET INIT-
IALLY IN CHTAURA JULY 21, TO DRAW UP PLANS FOR CEASE-FIRE IN
SOUTH LEBANON AND TO "IMPLEMENT" CAIRO ACCORD. KANAAN HAS BEEN
INVOLVED FOR YEARS IN LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN RELATIONSHIPS, AND WAS
PRESIDENT SARKIS' "MILITARY ADVISER" DURING THE MONTHS OF ARAB
QUADRIPARTITE COMMITTEE ACTIVITY.

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3. KANAAN SAID THAT HIS PERCEPTIONS OF THE GAMES BEING PLAYED
THIS WEEK WERE AS FOLLOWS: SALAH KHALAF (ABU IYAD), WHO HAS LONG
ASPIRED TO REPLACE YASSIR ARAFAT AS HEAD OF FATAH AND OF THE PLO,
HAS DECIDED TO "PLAY THE SYRIAN CARD" TO THIS END. HE HAS THERE-
FORE MADE ALLIANCE OF CONVENIENCE WITH SYRIAN REGIME. ABU IYAD
WOULD HAVE THE PLO ACCEED TO SYRIAN PRESSURE TO EFFECT SUBSTANTIAL
WITHDRAWALS FROM COMBAT POSITIONS IN THE SOUTH AND TO IMPLEMENT

CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE CAIRO ACCORD. IN RETURN, HE HOPES FOR SYRIAN SUPPORT TO DEPOSE PLO AND FATAH CHIEF YASSIR ARAFAT. KANAAN SAID THAT QUARREL BETWEEN ABU IYAD AND ARAFAT WAS COMPLETELY WITHOUT IDEOLOGICAL CONTENT; IT WAS STRICTLY A MATTER OF PERSONAL AMBITION. KANAAN SAID THAT ALL THE PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVES AT JULY 21 MEETING IN CHTAURA WERE IN ABU IYAD CAMP, WITH POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF ABU WALID, A STRAIGHTFORWARD MILITARY COMMANDER WHO AVOIDS FACTIONAL POLITICS. ARAFAT, AS IS HIS FREQUENT TACTIC IN THE PAST, HAS ABSENTED HIMSELF IN THIS MOMENT OF CRISIS. HE IS ABOARD SEEKING TO ASSURE CONTINUED EGYPTIAN AND SAUDI SUPPORT.

4. BETS ON ARAFAT. KANAAN BELIEVES THAT INTERNAL FATAH CRISIS WILL RESULT IN LIQUIDATION OF EITHER SALAH KHALAF OR ARAFAT, PERHAPS ACCOMPANIED WITH INTERNAL FATAH VIOLENCE. HE IS PERSONALLY CONVINCED THAT ARAFAT WILL PREVAIL, AS HE HAS IN THE PAST. ASKED BY EMBOFF HOW SYRIANS MUST PERCEIVE PROBLEM, KANAAN SAID HE THOUGHT AT HEART THEY WERE MISCALCULATING ABU IYAD'S STRENGTH.

5. SYRIAN-SAUDI PERSPECTIVE. KANAAN SAID SYRIANS FEEL THEMSELVES "ENCIRCLED" BY THE MORE CONSERVATIVE ARAB WORLD (SAUDI ARABIA, JORDAN, AND EGYPT). THEREFORE THEY SEEK A NEW ALLY, THE PALESTINIANS. SAUDI ARABIA IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY APPREHENSIVE OF SYRIAN SUCCESS IN LEBANON AND ON OTHER ISSUES, AND FEARS THAT ASAD REGIME HAS NOT DONE ENOUGH TO NEUTRALIZE IDEOLOGICAL BAATHIS. THUS, ASSAD'S GAME WAS TO OUTFLANK SAUDIS BY COOPTING PALESTINIANS - AT LEAST SOME OF THEM.
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6. TRIPARTITE COMMITTEE. KANAAN SAID PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVES DID INDEED AGREE TO ALL THE CONCESSIONS REFLECTED IN PRESS REPORTS OF JULY 21 MEETING IN CHTAURA. THEY HAVE AGREED TO WITHDRAW FROM BINT JUBAYL AND NABATIYAH AND A NUMBER OF OTHER LOCATIONS. THEY ARE WILLING TO "IMPLEMENT THE CAIRO ACCORD" BUT NOT TO GIVE UP THEIR WEAPONS. THEY SEE THEIR WEAPONS AS A NON-NEGOTIABLE ASSET IN THEIR STRUGGLE-AND THE ARAB WORLD'S STRUGGLE-WITH ISRAEL.

7. ISRAELI ROLE. KANAAN SAID THAT ISRAELIS HAD THE POWER, THROUGH THEIR ABILITY TO CONTROL CHRISTIAN MILITIAS IN THE SOUTH, TO VETO THE ARRANGEMENTS. THEREFORE, HE WAS ALMOST CERTAIN THAT PRESIDENT SARKIS AND FONMIN BOUTROS WOULD WANT TO ASK THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR TO ASK USG TO SPEAK WITH THE ISRAELIS TO WIN THEIR ACQUIESCENCE IN A CEASE-FIRE PLAN IN THE SOUTH. LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN-SYRIAN AGREEMENT WAS NOT ENOUGH.

8. LEBANESE FRONT ATTITUDES. AT LUNCH JULY 22, BECHIR GEMAYEL TOLD MOLINEAUX THAT HE BELIEVED PRESIDENT SARKIS WAS "MAKING A BIG MISTAKE" GETTING INVOLVED IN A TRIPARTITE COMMITTEE WITH THE PALESTINIANS AND SYRIANS IN WHICH HE (SARKIS) WAS SIMPLY ONE OF THREE PARTIES. IN BECHIR'S VIEW, THE GOL HAS SUBMITTED ITSELF TO ARBITR-

ATION. HE THOUGH THIS WAS UNWORTHY OF A PRESIENT OF A SOVEREIGN STATE. HE IMPLIED THAT THE "LEBANESE FRONT" MILITIA COMMAND WAS NOT AT ALL INVOLVED IN THE RECENT NEGOTIATIONS, AND OF COURSE IS NOT BOUND BY THEM. HE EVIDENTLY ALSO DOES NOT SEE THE ARRANGEMENTS AS A CONSTRAINT ON HIS OWN POSSIBLE COURSES OF ACTION IN THE SOUTH: HE TOLD MOLINEAUX HE HOPED TO BE IN NAQURAH WITHIN A WEEK. BECHIR WAS ALSO GREATLY INTERESTED IN THE UPSHOT OF THE CARTER-BEGIN TALKS IN WASHINGTON. (COMMENT: THIS WOULD TIE IN WITH OTHER REPORTING WHICH HAS SUGGESTED THAT THE CHRISTIANS EXPECT TO TAILOR THEIR OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS IN THE SOUTH TO THE STATE-OF-PLAY OF US-ISRAELI RELATIONS AFTER THE BEGIN VISIT TO WASHINGTON; SHOULD BEGIN EMERGE WITH A TOUGH POSITION VIS-A-VIS THE AMERICANS, THE CHRISTIANS WOULD INCREASE THEIR EXPECTATIONS OF ISRAELI SUPPORT FOR THEIR OWN OPERATIONS IN THE CONFIDENTIAL

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SOUTH).

9. AT SAME LUNCH AMBASSADOR DISCUSSED PALESTINIAN OFFER WITH PRE-SIDENT CHAMOUN AND BECHIR GEMAYEL. BOTH WERE VERY SCEPTICAL, NOT TO SAY CYNICAL. AMBASSADOR SAID HE SHARED THEIR DOUBTS, BUT PRELIMINARY INDICATIONS WERE THAT PALESTINIANS WERE SERIOUS. HE HOPED THEIR FORCES AS WELL AS ISRAELIS WOULD BE WAITING TO STAND FAST FOR A FEW DAYS TO SEE IF PALESTINIANS WERE SINCERE.

10. CHAMOUN SAID HE WOULD DO SO FOR A WEEK OR EVEN TEN DAYS, BUT HE FEARED WE WOULD FIND PALESTINIANS WERE LYING AS USUAL. BECHIR SAID IMPORTANT THING WAS TO TAKE NAQURAH, WHICH WOULD GIVE CHRISTIANS THEIR OWN PORT AND INDEPENDENT SUPPLY LINES SO THEY WOULD NOT HAVE TO RELY SO MUCH ON ISRAELIS. THIS WOULD SOLVE MANY PROBLEMS. AMBASSADOR SAID IT WOULD CREATE A NUMBER OF NEW ONES TOO.

11. BECHIR COMPLAINED THAT PALESTINIANS HAD CUT BOTH WATER AND ELECTRICITY TO RUMAYSH, AIN IBL, AND OTHER CHRISTIAN VILLAGES ALONG SOUTHERN BORDER AND CONFIRMED THAT THERE HAD BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL PALESTINIAN GROUND ATTACK AGAINST ALMA ASH AHAB ON JULY 20. HE DID NOT CLAIM HE HAD NO CONTROL OVER TROOPS IN SOUTH, NOR DID CHAMOUN, WHO COMPLAINED RATHER OF SHORTAGE OF WEAPONS AND ASKED SHY ISRAELIS DID NOT PREVENT SHIPMENTS OF ARMS FROM COMING INTO TYRE. SAID I HAD SAME QUESTION.
PARKER

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Message Attributes

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